

first

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the magazine for local government

Local elections

With 8,400 seats in 248 councils falling vacant, **Professors Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher** make their predictions for the May elections

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Research on how to support the visitor economy



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New online resource to help councils improve



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A year on from the Homelessness Reduction Act



NATIONAL CHILDREN AND ADULT SERVICES CONFERENCE 2019

BOURNEMOUTH 20-22 NOVEMBER



#ncasc19

Vital to councillors, directors, senior officers, directors of public health, policy makers and service managers as well as organisations with responsibilities for children and adults in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, the conference will include a mix of keynote and ministerial addresses as well as plenary sessions by expert representatives from the adult, children and education sectors.

There will also be opportunities to participate in a wide range of workshops and networking sessions. In addition, delegates will be able to visit the exhibition and speak with suppliers and providers of relevant services. **#ncasc19**

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Election call



Good luck to everybody out campaigning in the local elections. 2 May is a big day for local government in England, with 8,400 seats in 248 councils falling vacant.

Professors Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher provide their annual analysis and predictions in this month's **first** (p10).

Elsewhere in the magazine, we find out more about the LGA's latest skills roundtable (p12), and take a look at the skills needed by the tourism industry (p13).

There are features on the Homelessness Reduction Act, a year since it came into effect (p15); how councils are working towards the UN's sustainable goals (p19); and the launch of the new Local Government Mutual (p20).

You can also meet the council officers competing to win the LGA's tenth Local Government Challenge, and demonstrate their potential as future directors and chief executives (p16).

Our lead comment is from the Campaign to Protect Rural England, discussing its work identifying brownfield sites for housing development (p23). And we look ahead to this year's Spending Review in our Parliament section (p29).

All of **first's** stories and previous editions of the magazine are available on our website, at www.local.gov.uk/first, where you can also sign up for the **first** e-bulletin.

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Register proposed for home-schooled pupils

The Government has acted on a long-standing call by the LGA for a register of children not in school.

Estimates suggest almost 60,000 children are deemed to be educated at home – a figure that is thought to be rising by around one quarter every year.

In addition to a register, the Department for Education is consulting on new measures to support parents who choose to educate their children at home, in the form of a legal duty on local authorities to give assistance such as helping to pay for exam costs.

Cllr Annetoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "The LGA has long called for a register of children not in school and we look forward to seeing these proposals implemented as a matter of urgency. A register will help councils to monitor how children are being educated and prevent them from disappearing from the oversight of services designed to keep them safe.

"Councils fully support the rights of parents to educate their children in the best way they see fit, and the vast majority of parents who home educate their children do a fantastic job, and work well with their local

council to make sure that a good education is being provided.

"For the minority of children where this is not the case, councils need to be able to check a child's schooling, to make sure they are being taught a suitable and appropriate education in a safe environment.

"This is why the Government needs to go further and change the law to give councils the powers and appropriate funding to enter homes or other premises to check a child's schooling.

"Councils are keen to support families to make sure children get the best possible education – wherever they receive this. However, with children's services facing a £3.1 billion funding gap by 2025, it is vital that any additional responsibilities for councils are properly funded."

Meanwhile, in a separate report, Ofsted says it has investigated 521 suspected illegal schools, and inspected 259 since January 2016.

It estimates that as many as 6,000 children are being educated in the unregistered settings it has inspected to date. Almost a quarter (23 per cent) of the settings investigated are in London, with the rest spread fairly evenly across the country.

Teenage pregnancies fall

Conceptions among under-18s in England and Wales have decreased for the tenth year running and have reached record lows, according to the latest Office for National Statistics data.

In 2017, nearly 18 in 1,000 young women aged under 18 became pregnant, a 5.3 per cent decrease compared with the previous year, and more than half the rate compared with 2007. The estimated number of conceptions to women aged under 16 also fell to 2,517 in 2017, a 10.8 per cent drop from the previous 12 months.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said the figures reflect the hard work of councils and their partners in helping to improve the health, wellbeing and life chances of young people, but that there was no room for complacency.

He added: "We must sustain this downward trend, accelerate improvements in areas with high rates and narrow the inequalities we see between them, which will not only make a difference to individual lives, but reduce the long-term demand on health and social care services.

"Evidence shows that high-quality relationships and sex education – alongside welcoming and accessible sexual health services and friendly, non-judgmental staff – help young people to delay sex until they are ready, and to use contraception effectively.

"The Government's plans to make relationships and sex education in secondary schools and relationships education in primary schools compulsory will help to reduce teenage pregnancies and health inequalities.

"It also needs to train teachers and implement a high-quality curriculum in time for its rollout in September, as any delay risks a new cohort of young people facing unplanned pregnancy. The Government also needs to use the upcoming Spending Review to reverse the £700 million real-terms reductions in public health grants between 2015/16 and 2019/20, to help improve upon the fall in these rates."





Drop in spending on children's mental health

More than a third of local areas in England have reduced real-terms spending on 'low-level' children's mental health services, according to a report by the Children's Commissioner for England.

'Low-level' mental health services are preventative and early intervention services, such as support provided by school nurses or counsellors, drop-in centres or online counselling services.

The Children's Commissioner's report covers both local authority and NHS spending, and found local areas allocated a total of £226 million for low-level mental health services in 2018/19 – just over £14 per child.

There was also a wide variation in spending between areas, with the top 25 per cent spending at least £1.1 million or more, while the bottom 25 per cent spent £180,000 or less.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Significant funding pressures mean many councils are being forced to cut some of the vital early intervention services that can support children with low-level mental health issues and avoid more serious problems in later life.

"Children's services face a funding gap

of £3.1 billion by 2025, while public health services have seen cuts of £700 million. If we are to improve provision of preventative and early intervention services then it is vital the Government adequately funds these in the forthcoming Spending Review.

"But we also need the NHS to work more effectively with councils. In addition, the Government promised £1.7 billion for children's mental health, and it should make certain that all of this is received by children's mental health services, and not diverted elsewhere. Where it has been spent on other services, government should make up the shortfall."

Anne Longfield, the Children's Commissioner for England, said: "The NHS Ten Year Plan has made children's mental health a top priority, but it won't succeed unless children with low-level mental health problems are offered help quickly and early. Local authorities are under huge financial pressure and many are doing a good job, but those that are spending barely anything on low-level mental health cannot continue to leave children to struggle alone."

● See www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures for the LGA's campaign for properly funded children's services and support for mental health.

Pupils match places

New figures show that the proportion of state-funded schools in England that are over capacity has fallen.

Just over a fifth of primary schools had more pupils than places in 2018, the lowest level since 2013. At the same time, the level for secondary schools was 15 per cent, down from 16 per cent in 2017.

In response to sharply increasing demand, councils have helped create an extra 825,000 school places since 2010, made up of 557,000 primary and 248,000 secondary places. Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "The Government should recognise and credit the unique role of councils in school place creation and improvement, and should give councils the necessary powers to ensure they continue to play a leading role in providing school places for children."

She added: "It is good that school

standards are rising but, while there are examples of successful sponsored conversions to academy status, the evidence shows that converting to an academy is not always the best solution for a struggling school."

Meanwhile, parents have been finding out which primary school place their child has received for this September.

Cllr Bramble said: "Every child should have a fair chance of getting into their parents' preferred school, and councils and schools work extremely hard to try to ensure that as many pupils as possible are allocated their first preference.

"Councils have also responded to increasing demand with the creation of more than 800,000 new places since 2010. This is a demonstrable record that they are doing everything they can to rise to the challenge of ensuring no child goes without a place."

news in brief

Youth charter

The Government has announced its new Youth Charter, saying it reaffirms its commitment to giving young people a strong voice on issues they care about, such as tackling serious violence and knife crime. Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Councils are fully behind the Government's aspiration to support young people and help them reach their potential. However, if we really want to make a difference in young people's lives, we need to invest in the local services they want and need. As a starting point, the Government should look to devolve some of the money spent on the National Citizen Service scheme to help reverse some of these cuts."

Communication skills get support

Councils have been given £6.5 million for new projects, such as family reading sessions and parenting pop-ups, to help give young children the language skills they need to thrive at school. Eight projects across 27 councils will share expertise and resources. An LGA spokesperson said: "Councils are determined to make sure that children get the best start in life, and it's positive that some areas will receive funding to give additional support to families and improve children's early communication skills. The LGA is already helping councils through an early years peer-review programme of sector-led support, which will share and promote good practice across local government."

Digital care

Councils can bid for a share of £4.8 million in NHS Digital funding to help them rollout local adult social care digital projects on a wider scale. Grants are available for existing products and services that have been piloted in small local areas, or that have a strong evidence base, with the view to implementing them more widely. Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "This is important funding that will help councils, alongside local care providers and other partners, better use technology to improve the lives and experiences of people needing or receiving social care."

Brownfield housing

More than one million new homes could be delivered across more than 18,000 sites if better use was made of previously developed or 'brownfield' land for housing projects, according to a report from the Campaign to Protect Rural England. Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Housing Spokesman, said: "This timely report highlights the availability of sites across the country to deliver enough homes and infrastructure to begin to address the national housing shortage we face. Councils have given planning permission for hundreds of thousands of homes in England that are yet to be built. To ensure developers are building well-designed homes to a good quality and as quickly as possible, the Government needs to use the Spending Review to give councils the power to speed up developments and set planning fees locally. This would mean they can cover the cost of processing applications and ensure planning departments are adequately resourced."

● See p23.

BAME councillors

Researchers at the Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity at the University of Manchester want to speak to councillors from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds to find out more about their experiences. In particular, they are interested in how the policies and practices of the major parties shape the recruitment and progression of ethnic minority people, and how factors such as gender, generation and religion impacts voting. Despite recent changes to the political landscape, people from ethnic minorities remain under-represented in politics, including in local government, and there is very little research on the ethnicity of councillors. If you'd like to take part in this research, please contact neema.begum@manchester.ac.uk for more details.

first – online

Did you know that you can now read all of first's stories, and download previous editions of the magazine, at www.local.gov.uk/first? Our updated website allows you to search for stories by subject and author. You can also sign up for our first e-bulletin (see under 'Subscriptions'), which gives a sneak preview of our top stories ahead of publication of each magazine.

An end to 'no fault' evictions?

The Government is to consult on plans to abolish 'no fault' evictions of private sector tenants, in part to help reduce the number of families made homeless at the end of short-term tenancies.

The proposals would effectively create open-ended tenancies, with landlords having to provide a 'concrete, evidenced' reason for bringing tenancies to an end. Currently, landlords can uproot tenants from their homes with as little as two months' notice once their fixed-term deals have come to an end.



The LGA said: "Around a third of all families that councils accepted as homeless last year were made homeless by the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy.

"We therefore look forward to exploring the detail of the proposals that aim to ensure that landlords cannot evict tenants without sufficient warning or justification.

"However, the proposal does not address the unaffordability of housing which is a key reason many families lose their tenancy and become homeless.

"To address this, the Government needs to adapt welfare reforms, and reform Right to Buy, so that councils can build more genuinely affordable council homes.

"Housing security is critical for the health and wellbeing of families, and everyone deserves a safe, secure and affordable place to call home.

"The vast majority of landlords are responsible and provide decent housing for their tenants, but their reputation can be tarnished by a minority who can exploit loopholes with little regard for the welfare of tenants."

The Government is also proposing new protections for landlords, including ensuring they can regain their property should they wish to sell it or move into it, as well as expedited court processes when tenants have fallen into rent arrears or have damaged the property.

The consultation was announced ahead of the implementation of the Tenant Fees Act 2019, which will ban unfair letting fees and cap tenancy deposits.

Government 'must do more' on children's social care – MPs

The Department for Education has not done enough to make the quality or finances of children's social care sustainable, according to MPs.

A report from the Public Accounts Committee calls for a step-change in the department's understanding of the pressures on local services, the reduction of unnecessary variation between areas in their social care activities and the costs of providing them, and greater pace in its work with struggling local authorities.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "While recent Ofsted reports have been clear that the quality of children's services is continuing to improve, we agree with the committee that urgent action is needed to make the sector financially sustainable and ensure that all children are able to access

the help they need – when they need it. The LGA has long argued for a stronger cross-government commitment to children and families, and we are pleased that the committee supports this.

"This lack of joined-up leadership within government has contributed to a situation where councils find themselves looking after record numbers of children in care, with nine in 10 councils subsequently forced to overspend their children's social care budgets by more than £800 million in the past year alone.

"The majority of spend variation is because of wider economic or geographic circumstances largely outside councils' control. It is clear that the most urgent and pressing issue is not variability, but using the Spending Review to tackle the country-wide funding crisis in children's services, which face a funding gap of £3.1 billion by 2025."



'Address wider factors affecting homelessness rise'

More people are being placed in temporary and emergency accommodation as a result of new homelessness legislation, as councils struggle to cope with rising numbers of homeless people and a lack of affordable housing for them, according to the LGA

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into effect on 1 April last year, placing a renewed focus on homelessness prevention and introducing a range of new duties for councils. An LGA survey of councils to mark the anniversary – to which 151 responded – found that:

- Eight in 10 councils have seen an increase in homelessness presentations since the introduction of the Act.
- Six in 10 councils had increased the number of people being housed in temporary and emergency accommodation.
- The same number say the length of time people spend in temporary and emergency accommodation has increased.
- Limited access to affordable housing and a lack of suitable accommodation for people already sleeping rough is a serious concern for 91 per cent of councils.

Councils also complained about the excessive levels of paperwork and administration costs arising from the Act, which are hampering their ability to meet the needs of people at risk of homelessness.

Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Housing Spokesman, said: "Many councils have updated their homelessness prevention strategies since the Act was introduced last year. But a lack of affordable housing has left many struggling to cope with the rising number of people coming to them for help, and having to place more families and households into temporary and emergency accommodation as a result.

"This is bad for families and communities, expensive for councils, and not the aim of the Act.

"The wider factors that are increasing homelessness also need to be addressed if the Act is to be a success. Councils need to keep 100 per cent of Right to Buy sales receipts to replace homes sold, and to adapt welfare reforms to protect families at risk of homelessness and prevent homelessness from happening in the first place."

● See p15

Call for local income tax

Councils should be able to charge residents a local income tax to meet rising social care costs and drive further devolution, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has said.

The independent research institute said the levy could raise £6 billion a year if imposed at 1 per cent on all tax bands, which would help plug council funding gaps in England after years of cuts and rising demand for services.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Resources Board, said: "The UK is one of the most centralised economies in the western world. Local government in England faces an overall funding gap of £8 billion by 2025. If local areas are given freedom and control over their own finances, and the responsibility for growing their local economies, they will

be able to take a new approach to funding services in the future.

"Councils have called on the Government to consider allowing areas to retain a proportion of nationally collected taxes paid by their residents, such as income tax or stamp duty, along with appropriate redistribution arrangements and control over discounts and reductions.

"They also need the freedom to collect current local taxes differently, to support local priorities or introduce new ones, such as a tourist tax.

"Only with the right funding and powers can councils continue to lead their local areas, improve residents' lives, reduce demand for services and save money for the taxpayer."

Public health duty on youth violence

The Government has launched a consultation on a 'public health duty' to raise concerns about children at risk of becoming involved in knife crime.

The new multi-agency duty aims to help spot the warning signs that a young person could be in danger, such as presenting at hospital A&E departments with a suspicious injury, to worrying behaviour at school or issues at home.

The joined-up approach could also include organisations jointly funding early intervention services to improve their coordination. This would be backed by legislation to make sure professionals in health, education, police, social services, housing and the voluntary sector work together and are held accountable for preventing and tackling serious violence.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Resources Board, said: "If we are to stem the tide of tragic violence across the country there needs to be greater investment in services that protect and support young people, keeping them safe from the lure of gangs and county lines drug activity, or from becoming involved in serious crime.

"Youth offending teams within councils have an outstanding record of reducing youth crime and making a real difference to young people's lives, but they are under huge pressure after seeing their government funding halved over the past decade.

"Children's services are now starting more than 500 child protection investigations every day, but face a £3.1 billion funding gap by 2025. This is forcing councils to divert funding away from preventative services, such as youth work, into services to protect children who are at immediate risk of harm.

"To help stop young people being criminally exploited and drawn into knife crime, it is vital that government reverses years of funding cuts to local youth services, youth offending teams and councils' public health budgets, which need to be addressed in the Spending Review."

● See www.local.gov.uk/councils-can or #CouncilsCan on Twitter for more on the LGA's Spending Review campaign.



Priced out

It takes a single, first-time home buyer a decade on average to save for a deposit, according to a recent report from estate agent chain Hamptons International. Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Housing Spokesman, said: "This timely report highlights how the housing crisis is pricing people out of home-owning. The Government needs to use the Spending Review to support a more affordable housebuilding offer and give councils the funding and powers to resume their historic role as major house builders of good-quality, affordable homes. Critical to this goal is allowing councils to retain 100 per cent of their Right to Buy receipts and set discounts locally, and ensure that council planning departments have the power to set their own planning fees, which could save taxpayers up to £150 million per year."

Product safety

Dangerous toys, cars and household goods could flood into the UK after Brexit, according to consumer group Which? It says there could be delays to rooting out unsafe products unless current access to the European Safety Gate rapid warning system is not brokered. An LGA Spokesperson said: "Local authority trading standards teams continue to work hard to protect the public from unsafe products. It is vital that the Government and partners work with councils so that they retain timely access to information on unsafe product alerts. With the number of trading standards officers having more than halved since 2009, and budgets having almost halved since 2011, the Government needs to use the forthcoming Spending Review to address the funding shortfall that councils face."

Online harm

A recently published White Paper on online harm sets out plans to tackle a range of issues, including: the publication and sharing of terrorist material and inappropriate imagery; the use of social media for inciting violence or spreading disinformation; and online harassment and bullying. The proposals include a new regulatory framework for online safety, overseen by an independent regulator. The consultation runs until 1 July and if you have any comments you'd like the LGA to raise in response, please contact rachel.duke@local.gov.uk.

Sugar tax 'better spent on playgrounds'

Children's health would be better protected if money raised from the soft drinks levy was spent on local priorities, such as playgrounds, activities and after-school clubs to combat child obesity, the LGA has said.

In the 12 months since the 'sugar tax' came into force, producers are expected to have paid an estimated £250 million – money that should be used to help deliver vital public health schemes to improve the next generation's life chances.

The LGA has said funding could go towards protecting and improving children's oral health, and providing early years play equipment and activities, while also encouraging healthier eating and exercise. Currently, funding from the levy goes towards school sports and breakfast clubs.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "In a year since the soft drinks industry levy was introduced, manufacturers have cut the amount of sugar in their products while hundreds of millions of pounds have been

raised in revenue. It is vital that the funds raised so far are invested in the best possible way, to ensure that our children get the greatest start in life.

"However, to truly tackle our child obesity epidemic, councils need to be able to use this money to intervene earlier and do more to ensure that our children stay healthy, active and develop good eating habits, which they can continue into adulthood.

"This in turn will lead to less pressure on our already overstretched public services, including the NHS, saving the country much more from obesity-related treatment in future."

He added: "Councils are uniquely placed to tackle obesity, given their links to local health, community and voluntary services, as well as schools.

"This includes the costs of running the Government's National Child Measurement Programme in schools, as well as programmes such as weight management services, exercise referral schemes, and offering free or reduced-cost sport."



Cash to fill potholes

The Government has announced funding of £201 million for road maintenance and potholes.

The funding, for councils across England, excluding London, comprises £50 million for potholes and flood resilience, as well as £151 million to reward councils that adopt best practice and encourage good asset management.

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Transport Spokesman, said: "Potholes are the scourge of all road users and this funding is good news to help councils repair them and pioneer innovative ways to stop them forming in the first place.

"While innovation will help councils that are fixing a pothole every 17 seconds, funding challenges remain for local authorities to deal with long-term maintenance of their local roads and address a backlog of road repairs – which has risen to nearly £10 billion – to provide better roads that are safer and more resilient to constant use.

"This is why we have called on the Government to also invest the equivalent of 2p of existing fuel duty to bring our roads up to scratch. Long-term funding will help to avoid more costly short-term repairs. The Government needs to address this in the forthcoming Spending Review."

letters

Mission launch to zero carbon

Oxford City Council is speeding up our journey towards a Zero Carbon Oxford to tackle dangerous climate change.

We have facilitated a £41 million project to trial the world's largest hybrid energy storage system in Oxford, to support rapid electric vehicle charging and low carbon heat networking. The project will deliver a saving of 20,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year by 2021, rising to 44,000 tonnes per year by 2032.

Energy Superhub Oxford (ESO) – a collaboration between Pivot Power, Habitat Energy, redT, Kensa, Oxford University and ourselves – will trial the world's largest hybrid battery system (50MW) to support the acceleration of Oxford's rapid electric vehicle charging capacity, and to implement money-saving ground source heat pumps for more than 300 buildings and homes.

A large battery, connected to a substation, will store and resupply electricity directly back to the Grid. Cable will be used to give large-scale electric vehicle charging capabilities to city council depots, local bus companies, taxi providers and commercial fleet depots. It will enable the council to speed up electrification of our refuse lorries, sweepers and other vehicles to meet our climate and air pollution emergencies.

The city's black cab drivers will be given extra help to transition from 100 per cent diesel-run to all electric in the next few years, consistent with our proposals to implement the world's first Zero Emission Zone from 2020.

The technology will be able to shift the demand to periods of low prices, minimise bills and overcome local network constraints.

The pilot project will last for 36 months, after which the aim is to expand the technology to up to 44 UK sites. We want councils to learn from our efforts and to get in touch to find out more about our project.

ClIr Tom Hayes (Lab), Executive Board Member for a Safer and Greener Environment, Oxford City Council

Children to breathe easier

Roads leading to two primary schools in Ilford will be closed to traffic at the start and end of the school day, under a bold scheme we are starting here in Redbridge.

The initiative aims to protect children from air pollution and traffic during their journey and will be launched during the summer term.

It is part of the Redbridge Schools Clean Air Zones pilot programme. Signs will notify drivers that roads surrounding the school can only be accessed by cyclists and pedestrians at the displayed times, unless vehicles receive an exemption.

Exemptions will apply to residents and businesses in the zone, or a Blue Badge holder requiring access.

Vehicles that are not exempted and that enter the closed street during peak times will be identified by automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras and issued with a penalty charge notice.



sound bites

ClIr Edward Crouch (Con, Worthing)

"Another major step forward tonight as we agreed over 50 new local sites for ultrafast gigabit internet connection. Worthing is leading the way in the region with this digital revolution and it will have a huge impact on the local economy."

www.twitter.com/EdwardCrouchUK

ClIr Sean Fielding (Lab, Oldham)

"Today has been an arty day... Following visit to the Coliseum, great to go and see the William Stott exhibition at @GalleryOldham with @CWilkinsOldham. Brilliant to have this facility and exhibition here in partnership with @Tate and complemented with research by a local volunteer."

www.twitter.com/clrsfielding

ClIr Paul Kohler (Lib Dem, Merton)

"Good news from our litter pick around the Battles area in Trinity & Abbey on Saturday. 8 of us filled just 5 bags & amount of litter on street has definitely improved. We've left it in usual place for collection @VeoliaUK – time to sort the detritus tho which sadly deteriorating."

www.twitter.com/trinity_lib_dem

ClIr Georgia Gould (Lab, Camden)

"Beautiful illustration of the rich conversations we've been having today about how to build new connections & hope at a time of rising division, alienation & hate. Such an uplifting celebration of inclusion, compassion & humanity #WeMakeCamden."

www.twitter.com/Georgia_Gould

We have a duty to protect our children's health, both as a council and as part of the community ourselves. Targeting congested areas outside of schools will cut down on pollution caused by traffic and make roads much safer for children.

We know that air quality is a top concern for parents, and that's why we're working on initiatives such as this – to build a cleaner and safer environment for our residents, and mitigate the impact pollution has on local young people.

ClIr Jas Athwal (Lab), Leader, Redbridge Council

Councillors' allowances

I have to say that I agree 100 per cent with the views expressed by ClIr Bruce Baker (**first**, 634).

I was chatting the other week to a member of a visiting choir (my wife is musical director of the Leigh Orpheus Male Voice Choir) and the subject of allowances came up, as he was a councillor in South Wales.

He was amazed that anyone would be a councillor at the rate of allowance that we receive. In South Wales, he was being paid more than double the rate in Southend.

We have in the past lost our meals before meetings, mileage allowance and even a dedicated telephone line!

A national allowance system is long overdue.

ClIr Chris Walker (Con), Southend-on-Sea Borough Council



What do you think? Please submit letters for publication by emailing karen.thornton@local.gov.uk. Letters may be edited and published online

features



Local elections 2019

The Conservatives could lose most of their 2015 gains but Labour needs to make substantial advances



Professors Colin Rallings (left) and Michael Thrasher are Associate Members, Nuffield College, Oxford



implementing often quite radical reviews of their ward boundaries and councillor numbers.

As a result, the total number of councillors in England has shrunk by more than 600, to a little more than 17,100, compared with four years ago –

and further reductions are on the way.

Politically, these elections largely reprise those held on General Election day 2015, when the Conservatives made more than 500 gains in tandem with David Cameron forming a majority government. Labour and the Liberal Democrats both lost ground, with Cameron's former junior coalition partners being particularly hard hit, losing nearly four in 10 of all the seats they were defending.

The 2015 elections also had an impact at the LGA, with Labour no longer being the largest party after just one year. This time, the very extent of the contests means that a strong Labour performance could again put the LGA's political balance at stake.

Recent local by-elections certainly suggest that the Conservatives have fallen back from their highs of four years ago, though they are not experiencing the kind of wipeout common for governing parties in recent decades. They are fielding candidates for 19 out of every 20 vacancies, but their main problem may be persuading their natural voters to turn out at all,

given the party's factional turmoil. They could well lose most of their 2015 gains and, with them, control of councils such as Broxtowe, High Peak and South Gloucestershire, which they took then. In Gravesham, another 2015 success, a dispute over reselections led to a breakaway Independent Conservative group being set up and left Labour as the largest party on the council – a position they are likely to retain after May's elections.

The Leave-voting parts of the West Midlands have been a happier hunting ground for the Conservatives recently, and a repeat of last year's results would see them seize control in both Dudley and Walsall.

Labour too, with a candidate in more than three-quarters of seats, are contesting a greater proportion of vacancies than in 2015. However, the party is not doing as well as an opposition should at this stage in the Parliament, registering fewer than 10 net by-election gains since the last General Election. Their average vote share is up by about 3.5 points over the same period, but they now need to make a substantial advance given that its lacklustre 2015 performance is the benchmark for these contests.

Labour should add two to the 30 out of 36 metropolitan boroughs they currently hold by winning both Calderdale and Trafford for the first time in nigh on 20 years. A simple reprise of last year's performance will be enough. Just two gains would tip Redcar & Cleveland back into the party's column and Stoke-on-Trent really should be in Labour's sights after several years of flirtation with various Independent groups.

The shire districts have always been something of an electoral desert for Labour, but victory in Carlisle (where the number of councillors drops from 52 to 39) and in Redditch (a surprise Conservative gain last year) would be a boost to the party's

For the fifth time in six years, the local elections are being overshadowed by national political events – and Brexit has the potential to deliver a shock to the campaign right up until polling day.

But to those in local government, they are important contests in their own right at the busiest point in the electoral cycle. With 8,400 seats in 248 councils falling vacant, about three-quarters of all electors in England have the opportunity to vote.

Beneath the surface, though, these elections also betoken the current reorganisation of local government by stealth. Five new councils have inaugural elections after the abolition of, or merger between, their predecessors – and there are no elections at all in the districts within two counties, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, pending similar change.

Elsewhere, nearly a dozen councils have switched from election by thirds to all-out contests and do not have elections this year; and no fewer than 51 authorities are



“The number of councillors in England has shrunk by more than 600 compared with four years ago – and further reductions are on the way”

parliamentary hopes too. Labour’s target must be to win close to 20 per cent of all district council seats, compared with 15 per cent in 2015 and 17 per cent in 2011.

The Liberal Democrats continue to languish at a near 35-year low in terms of their presence in local government. With fewer than 10 per cent of all councillors in England and just 11 councils under majority control, they struggle to make their voice heard. They have made more net gains than Labour in recent by-elections and outscored Jeremy Corbyn’s party on the same measure at last May’s contests too. And they are contesting more than 50 per cent of seats this year compared with 46 per cent in 2015. But it all amounts to comparatively modest fare.

They will now hope to gain overall control of Winchester by taking four wards that they won in the 2016 and 2018 contests from the Conservatives, and to deprive them of their majority in St Albans. There is also scope to become the largest party in Stockport if they can eat into Conservative territory in Hazel Grove and Marple. It may be pertinent that all three council areas voted Remain in the 2016 EU Referendum.

The Greens are the fourth-largest single party in English local government. However, they have made just four net gains and suffered a loss of vote share since the 2017 General Election. In Norwich, for example, they won four wards in 2015, but none last year. Two of their biggest tests this time will come in Brighton & Hove, where they polled a quarter of the vote four years ago, and in York (15 per cent in 2015).

UKIP, which is likely to have few if any councillors elected, does present something of an analytical puzzle. On paper, they are defending more than 150 seats from 2015, but, in reality, most of these have already been sacrificed to defections or by-election defeats. The formal record will show these as losses now though, and in places such as

Tendring and Thanet that could help boost the tally of Conservative gains.

A modest uplift for Independents would also not be surprising. In the current circumstances, many electors who habitually vote in local contests might be tempted to choose someone whose essential message is ‘a plague on all their houses’.

Indeed, the contests for directly elected mayors have long pointed up the fragility of party political loyalty. Ken Livingstone stood as an Independent when he became the inaugural Mayor of London in 2000, and five of the 11 mayors first chosen across England in 2002 had a similar denomination.

Sitting Independents will defend this year’s mayoral elections in Copeland and Mansfield, while in Middlesbrough, the Independent who lost by just 256 votes to Labour in 2015 tries his luck again against a new Labour candidate. In Bedford, Liberal Democrat Dave Hodgson attempts to be re-elected after nearly 10 years in office in an area where his party falls short in every other type of contest. Only in Leicester, where Labour’s Sir Peter Soulsby stands again, does the result look clear cut.

There is intrigue too in the contest to be the first mayor of the North of Tyne Combined Authority. Newcastle City Council and LGA Labour Group Leader Nick Forbes failed to secure his party’s nomination against novice councillor Jamie Driscoll, and a well-known local businessman – John McCabe – has entered the lists as, yes, an Independent.

Local elections 2019

Total – 8,399 seats (plus casual vacancies) in 248 councils

newly formed authorities; a third of seats (657) in 47 councils

Metropolitan boroughs – a third of seats (727) in 33 councils

Unitary authorities – all seats (1,595) in 30 councils, including nine with boundary changes and inaugural elections in two newly formed authorities; a third of seats (285) in 17 councils

Inaugural elections

Unitary authorities – Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole; Dorset.

District councils – East Suffolk; West Suffolk; Somerset West & Taunton.

District councils – all seats (5,135) in 121 councils, including 42 with boundary changes and inaugural elections in three

Mayoral elections

Bedford; Copeland; Leicester; Mansfield; Middlesbrough; North of Tyne region

	Con	Lab	LD	UKIP	Ind/Other	No overall control
Current control	140	68	6	-	1	33
Seats being defended*	4,895	2,097	641	174	592	-

*accounting for boundary changes



The future of work

The LGA's Skills Taskforce has been considering how the changing skills needs of specific industries will play out in the local economy over the coming years

Leading councillors and stakeholders from the skills, employment and education sectors met recently for the third in a series of LGA Skills Taskforce roundtables.

Through this process, it has become clear many organisations agree that the current system needs improvement and that a place-based approach is important.

Research shows that the rate of improvement in the UK skills base has stalled as a result of cuts in public funding for adult skills, along with falling employer investment in skills. Brexit, automation and extended working lives require us to rethink how we adapt to the future jobs market.

This final roundtable was structured around two issues: understanding the impact of changing skills and labour market conditions, nationally and locally; and responding to the skills challenge as a nation and in local areas.

When it comes to our understanding of the current skills context, a key factor is that the labour market is changing – and sectors, employers and individuals need to adapt.

There is demand for skills at all levels, with businesses facing shortages from Level 2 to higher apprenticeships.

Different sectors have specific challenges to address. For example, construction employers report that work-readiness is a problem. They are keen to work more with further education colleges to address soft skills through short interventions. The automotive industry believes it needs to be

“Career pilots are showing that how individuals are identified, engaged and incentivised is important, and can be done to best effect locally”

on the front foot and take further education providers with it.

Meanwhile, employees are looking at other factors than pay when it comes to considering their job options, such as flexibility, conditions and progression.

The skills system needs to catch up, fast – but it must be properly resourced. There needs to be strong connections between business, local enterprise partnerships, universities and training providers, with regular dialogue on what is needed locally – and councils could be the facilitators.

So what do national and local government, individuals and employers need

to do to respond to these skills challenges?

Our participants concluded that we need to understand fully where the jobs are, and how to access them. This includes the different types of work that exist within sectors, where they are located, and the skills they currently need, and how this might change in the future. There was consensus that there needs to be a sharper focus on careers advice and guidance – and that adults also need access to a good system; and clear recognition that employers should be expected to invest in training and skills, but that they need more flexibility and control over how skills money is spent.

Investment in skills provision is required and important, but we need to ensure it is directed in the right way. Progression routes are critical. We need a system that allows the notion of lifelong learning, retraining and ongoing development to flourish.

Everyone agreed that we need to make apprenticeships work; the idea of pooling and transfers, by sector or place, offers potential. There was broad agreement on the need for levy flexibility and that it would be helpful to talk to the Government about this – and that it should be down to individual employers how they use it.

Where provision of skills is funded through general taxation, state intervention operates better, most of the time, at a local labour market level. A one size fits all model will almost certainly not work. Current career pilots are showing that how individuals are identified, engaged and incentivised is important, and can be done to best effect locally.



You can download the full reports on the LGA's skills roundtables at www.local.gov.uk/skills-taskforce. Findings from the LGA's Skills Taskforce will be drawn together at the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham on 2-4 July – see www.local.gov.uk/conference. For further information, please email Jasbir Jhas, LGA Senior Adviser for Employment and Skills, at jasbir.jhas@local.gov.uk

Skills for tourism

Research into council areas with significant visitor economies aims to identify how best to support skills and employment in the tourism sector



In 2017, the LGA launched Work Local as our positive proposal for a place-based approach to our skills and employment system.

This is needed because every area has unique labour market and skills challenges, which our national system has failed to address adequately. Councils and combined authorities can and should be part of the solution.

As councils are starting to work with partners on their local industrial strategies and associated skills plans, we wanted to provide an update on how these proposals can support specific sectors.

In November 2018, the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board commissioned research into how applying Work Local principles could benefit the tourism sector. Tourism in the UK today is worth £126.9 billion, employs more than 3.1 million people and includes a huge export component of around £29.8 billion annually.

It is two-and-a-half times bigger than the automotive industry, a bigger exporter than the insurance industry and growing faster than digital – so tourism matters to the UK economy and to local economies. Every council area has a significant number of jobs generated by visitors, whether they are from the local area or overseas.

But it has historically been seen as a sector that offers short-term, seasonal jobs with limited career paths. It is composed primarily of small and medium-sized businesses that often do not have formal HR departments and

*“Every council area has a significant number of jobs generated by visitors, **local or overseas**”*

can struggle to access existing skills schemes such as the apprenticeship levy.

With up to 90 per cent of employees in some areas coming from the EU, it is also a sector that has the potential to be affected significantly by any changes to immigration laws after Brexit.

Rubicon Regeneration and Red Box Research have been conducting in-depth research into six council areas with significant visitor economies. The aim is to find out what plans are in place to support skills in the tourism sector, where there are gaps in provision and data, and to identify what could be done if a localised skills system based on Work Local principles was introduced.

The areas are: Blackpool, the UK's most popular seaside destination; Brighton and Hove, where tourism accounts for one in five jobs; Cambridge, where visitor numbers have increased by half over the past four years; Cornwall, which has a visitor expenditure of £1.9 billion; Greenwich, where tourist numbers are at a record high; and Scarborough, where tourism accounts for 17,356 jobs and generates around £730 million for the local economy.

All the areas report common themes, including: limited local data and evidence; a tendency for local employment and skills

plans to focus on 'bright new sectors'; a lack of a consistent local sector voice on skills; a lack of capacity for many tourism and hospitality businesses to engage with national skills initiatives; and the importance of strong partnerships between the industry and public agencies, but a lack of capacity in the public sector to engage.

Despite these challenges, some innovative work is going on in these areas to address skills gaps. Much more could be done, however, if the skills system was devolved to local areas with the powers and funding to plan, commission and oversee a joined-up service that brings together careers advice and guidance, employment, skills, apprenticeship and business support for individuals and employers.

The results of the research will be launched at the LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth on 2-4 July, with advice for councils and combined authorities, recommendations for national government, and a collaborative offer to the education, tourism and hospitality sectors.

i See www.local.gov.uk/work-local for the LGA's vision for employment and skills



Bringing improvement resources together

The LGA has helped to develop a new online resource, including a self-assessment tool, to help councils drive continuous improvement



Councillor Joy Allen (Lab) is Portfolio Holder for Transformation at Durham County Council and a member of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

The pressure on local government to continue improving the services we deliver and provide good value remains intense.

Authorities are trying to understand customers' needs, deliver positive outcomes and yet drive further efficiencies, in a world where we have seen our funding under more pressure than ever – all while managing the expectations of residents, businesses and central government. But the sector has a good track record of working together, learning from each other and challenging ourselves to improve.

To support this objective, the LGA, in partnership with many councils – and working with a consortium that includes public sector transformation partner iESE – has been developing a new online resource for the sector.

The focus is on efficiency and intelligent use of resources, and the aim is to help authorities drive continuous improvement.

It involves a self-assessment tool to help councils understand their current position on this improvement journey. Importantly, it also provides links to resources and learning to help them with next steps, drawing on the experiences and successes of others.

We recognise that many councils are already self-aware and know there are no shortcuts along this improvement journey. Collectively, we have introduced more and more efficiencies in our operations, to the point where we have achieved most of the obvious opportunities. But there is still benefit in learning from each other and, although there may be fewer quick wins remaining, the sector can gain from sharing more innovative or transformative work that has secured real and lasting improvements.

The Improvement Hub is to be launched with three objectives:

- to capture and describe the characteristics of efficient and intelligent councils, and turn this into a narrative
- to gather in one place all of the resources, guidance, tools and training that councils may find useful, and to provide a means of dialogue on the content and challenges moving forward
- to help councils get started by providing an online self-assessment improvement

tool to help identify where they currently are and where they would like to get to in 18 to 24 months time.

The purpose of the self-assessment tool is to allow councils to understand their position and ambition for change, whether that is by: process redesign to improve service delivery; customer-centric design to improve customer experience and outcomes; greater commercialisation; taking a wider community focus to issues such as prevention; or by a mix of these. It is designed to help all councils – the ambitious and leading edge, as well as those taking steps earlier in their journey.

It is our plan that the Improvement Hub will gather together information, tools and help – with links to useful resources – that are easily accessible and that senior management or leadership teams can access and deploy within their organisations. We're working actively with councils to develop it at the moment, with the aim of launching a first version at the LGA's annual conference in July. Please look out for it; we hope it will be useful and we would welcome feedback.

● See www.local.gov.uk/our-support

“The sector has a good track record of working together, learning from each other and challenging ourselves to improve”

The beginning of April marked the first anniversary of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 coming into force.

Councils are ambitious and working to make a success of the Act – which placed a renewed focus on homelessness prevention and introduced a range of new duties for councils – but they are facing real challenges.

Under immense financial pressure, councils have done everything they can to prevent and relieve homelessness in recent years – from joining up services to address its root causes, to outreach and support staff on the front line supporting rough sleepers. But the effort of councils has not been matched by funding and policy reform from central government.

Our recent Homelessness Reduction Act survey, which asked councils about their experiences since the Act's implementation, reveals that more and more people are turning up at councils' doors for help, and many are struggling to cope with the rising numbers of people at risk of homelessness.

Councils are doing everything in their power to address the issue, but more people are being placed in temporary and emergency accommodation and stay there for longer, our survey reveals. More than 200,000 people are already living in temporary accommodation – including in bed and breakfasts, hostels and private rented properties – with more than half of them children. Councils cannot continue to foot the bill, and moving people from temporary accommodation into good-quality, affordable homes is increasingly difficult.

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy and its £100 million cash injection will give councils some respite, but with homelessness services facing a funding gap of more than £100 million in 2019/20 alone, and £421 million by 2024/25, homelessness is clearly a national issue that requires a national solution.

At the heart of the issue lies the chronic shortage of good-quality, affordable homes, with nine in 10 councils concerned that there is limited access to affordable housing and a lack of suitable accommodation for people already sleeping rough.

Historically, councils have been at the front of the queue when it comes to building homes to match local needs – but despite council house building being at its highest in the past 17 years, councils simply aren't in a position to build as many homes as they would like. Only

“At the heart of the issue lies the chronic shortage of good-quality affordable homes”



Tackling homelessness

A year on from the Homelessness Reduction Act, an LGA survey shows that demand for accommodation has increased



Councillor Martin Tett is Housing Spokesman for the LGA

by supporting homeless families into good-quality homes that are genuinely affordable can we really begin to tackle homelessness and make a success of the Act.

To begin to address homelessness the Government must: use its upcoming Spending Review to adapt welfare reforms; free councils to build more social homes, by allowing them to retain 100 per cent of their Right to Buy receipts and set discounts locally; and sustainably fund councils to deliver homelessness services.

More than 80,000 homeless families are currently in temporary accommodation, and a further one million people are on council waiting lists. They deserve a decent home to call their own.

● See www.local.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-planning

Homelessness Reduction Act survey

- Eight in 10 councils have seen an increase in homelessness presentations since the introduction of the Act.
- Six in 10 said the number of people they were housing in temporary and emergency accommodation had risen, and the length of time people spend in such accommodation has increased.
- Limited affordable housing and a lack of suitable accommodation for people sleeping rough is a serious concern for 91 per cent of councils.
- Councils across the country said excessive paperwork required by the Act is costing them too much in administration and hampering their ability to meet the needs of people at risk of homelessness.



Local Government Challenge 2019

The LGA-run Local Government Challenge has again required ambitious council officers to don their thinking caps as they face a series of tough local government challenges designed to develop their leadership skills.

Ten contestants are part-way through the Apprentice-style competition in which they undertake real-life tasks at councils.

With a £10,000 Bruce-Lockhart Scholarship up for grabs, to implement a project that really makes a difference to local government and communities, the contestants have got their 'game faces' on as they bid to come out on top.

The tenth LG Challenge kicked off on a frosty January morning with a task hosted by Cherwell District Council to determine how public services can work together more effectively to deliver healthy places across Oxfordshire.

The contestants were split into two teams and had just 24 hours to develop an action plan to identify how Oxfordshire could ensure buy-in from different stakeholder groups to deliver healthy places and how they would need to work differently with their partners to deliver it.

After a whirlwind speed-dating style Q&A session with delegates from across the sector, afternoon site visits and a networking dinner,

Aspiring council officers are battling it out to win the LGA's Apprentice-style competition

there were more location visits the following day and idea testing with the Oxfordshire Strategic Delivery Board. The teams then submitted their documents to the judges.

Both teams impressed, but Team Ignite's idea to strengthen community activation through the use of 'Change Makers' – people already active in the community who would use their local knowledge to involve the community and engage with 'hard to reach' residents, in return for access to accreditations and training opportunities – just pipped Team Thrive to become the winners of the first challenge of 2019.

For the second challenge, the contestants travelled to Wiltshire Council, where they were tasked with putting forward bid proposals for the Future High Street Fund, to boost the

appeal of Salisbury in the wake of the recent Novichok attacks.

The contestants have recently completed their third challenge at Breckland Council, in Norfolk. They assumed total responsibility for the strategic management of a fictitious council in a real-time scenario, during which they dealt with the 'media' and edited a residents' magazine before making a presentation to judges.

With two challenges remaining, the contestants will have the opportunity to add to their cumulative scores from which, at the close of the fifth challenge, four finalists will be chosen to attend the LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth (2-4 July). There, they will pitch their personal projects to delegates and a panel of judges before the winner is announced.



For more information about the Local Government Challenge, please visit www.local.gov.uk/lgchallenge. To book your place at the LGA's annual conference, please visit www.local.gov.uk/events

My LG Challenge

Hannah Lucey, from Kent County Council, was an LG Challenge finalist in 2018

The first challenge was at the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. I wasn't sure what to expect, but the nine other contestants were lovely. We undertook research, community engagement and market testing before pulling together a proposal and a supporting presentation to the council leader, cabinet members and senior officers.

Over the next few months, the group visited Staffordshire County Council, Wiltshire Council, Kirklees Council and Cumbria County Council. It was a great experience to visit other councils, hear about how they work, find out more about the issues they face, and work together to come up with an innovative solution in 24 hours.

The challenges included everything from ideas to enable disabled people to find and keep employment to developing a face-to-face customer service offer with a 'digital first' approach. A few of the ideas are being taken forward, so it is great knowing that what we proposed will have a life beyond the challenge.

After five challenges, and a tense tie-breaker, I was selected to take part in the final, alongside three others – and I chose to pitch a project encouraging the under-25s to take part in local government decision-making. The finalists had a stand at the LGA Conference in July, when we tested our ideas with delegates.

Each finalist presented their idea to a panel of judges, which included Cllr Paul Carter, Leader of Kent County Council. Kartar Singh, from Wiltshire Council, was named the winner for his proposal for development of road maintenance with plastic waste. Although I didn't win, I was very proud of what I had achieved, and we had a fabulous time celebrating.

The whole experience was an extremely exciting and unique learning and development opportunity that I am sure will never be matched again in my career. I would highly recommend anyone in local government to take part, either as a contestant or a host authority.

As a result of the challenge, I was asked by Cllr Paul Carter to join his team on secondment. This is now my permanent role and, without doubt, I would not have had this opportunity without the LG Challenge.

Meet the 2019 contestants



"My role is diverse and engaging, bringing up new challenges every day, and I have learnt much from having to think on my feet and be flexible with what is asked of me."

Adam Wassell, Senior Economic and Regeneration Officer, Gloucester City Council



"As a born and bred Wiganer, the opportunity to showcase my home town to a national audience was a great motivation to apply as well as the chance to share the innovative work that my colleagues and I undertake on a daily basis."

Bob Allen, Drugs and Alcohol Project and Operations Manager, Wigan Council



"I'm looking to gain valuable insight into other local authorities' practices, what we do differently, and experience new and creative solutions around the challenges we are all currently facing."

Celeia Prado-Teeling, Insight Analyst, Cherwell and South Northamptonshire District Councils



"Everyone can be guilty of losing their direction and it's the push of challenges such as this one that reignites the flame and inspires spectacular innovation. I want to serve the residents of Wigan in a way that is caring, imaginative and person-led, and I believe this to be my fuel to apply for the LG Challenge."

Emily Kindred, Programme Support Officer, Wigan Council



"My role is to design, procure, monitor and evaluate the delivery of public health services, ensuring they meet the needs of local children and young people. The role is challenging, with less funding available for services, a growing young population and greater levels of need than ever before."

Hollie Stone, Commissioning Manager, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham



"I want to grow personally and professionally, and to learn new skills that I will benefit from in my future career. I want to grow my confidence, push myself outside of my comfort zone and support others that may face the same challenge."

Katy Smith, Senior HR Business Adviser, Kent County Council



"I am massively passionate about the positive and vital role local government plays in enabling communities to thrive. This is a fantastic opportunity to challenge myself, personally and professionally, and develop skills that I can then use to support residents and their communities."

Matthew Snelling, Policy, Strategy and Partnerships Officer, London Borough of Merton



"My current role focuses on delivering service transformation to improve experiences and outcomes for children and their families. I am excited to be part of the challenge."

Rob Comber, Service Development Manager, Kent County Council



"I currently work within the Transformation Team, working on large projects across our organisation. My passion lies within culture change and redesigning current systems and structures. I am also a keen advocate for young people across Kirklees, and have run successful conferences and new development opportunities."

Sarah Thistlethwaite, Project Officer, Kirklees Council



"I provide guidance, support and assurance for the delivery of Merton's transformational projects and other continuous improvement activities, producing monthly project reports to the board. I am very excited to be a part of this and am looking forward to the challenge."

Susie Grounds, Corporate Programmes Officer, London Borough of Merton



Public health transformation

Councils continue to help people lead healthier lives since taking on responsibility for public health

It is six years since public health transferred to local government, and with each successive LGA annual report we see how public health is becoming an increasingly effective and vital part of local government. It leads and supports our aims to develop healthy, prosperous and inclusive communities and environments.

Councillors with responsibility for health and wellbeing and directors of public health (DsPH) from more than 50 councils have contributed to a series of annual reports.

In this year's report, 'Public health transformation six years on: partnerships and prevention', it is again clear that – despite the challenges they face – DsPH and their teams love their work, because they see results and there are always new opportunities to make a difference. Lead councillors are equally enthusiastic and point out how, over the years, their colleagues are increasingly engaged in improving health and wellbeing.

In 2019, despite the huge financial constraints facing public health and councils overall, public health teams have continued to do an excellent job across the whole spectrum of activity: mental health

and wellbeing for children and adults; the best start for children and young people; supporting healthy behaviours; better data and intelligence; healthy places – both rural and urban; addressing the wider determinants of health, including economic growth; and tackling health inequalities by working with neighbourhoods.

A theme identified in this annual report is that, having built a sound foundation of services that have been effectively reshaped and recommissioned, public health is able to give more time to developing partnerships. Key partnerships for upper-tier councils are with districts and boroughs, many of which are now extremely proactive in shaping their work to promote health. Later this year, the LGA will publish a report on good practice in districts to help all reach their full potential.

Partnerships with the NHS are also a high priority, with many DsPH leading the prevention strand of sustainability and transformation partnerships (STPs). Unfortunately, while relationships are good and there are examples of excellent joint work, we are disappointed that the main focus has been on tackling NHS priorities,

such as reducing A&E attendance and organisational deficits. This is a missed opportunity to collaborate to improve health and wellbeing, and to reduce future demand on health and care services.

This year, it is important to reinforce the reasons why responsibility for key public health functions was transferred to local government. The case studies in the report – written before the publication of the NHS Long Term Plan – show the excellent work that public health in local government is doing to commission for quality and best value across all areas.

All of this outstanding work is in the context of a reduction to public health grant funding of more than £700 million in real terms between 2015/16 and 2019/20, at a time when the NHS is to receive additional funding of £20.5 billion over five years and prevention is high on the national agenda.

The forthcoming government Green Paper on prevention should allow us to consider the opportunities for prevention from a system-wide perspective, which includes all the social determinants of health. However, it must be based on engagement with councils and the public health community, and – for any progress to be made – it must be accompanied by proper funding for local government public health.

“In 2019, despite huge financial constraints, public health teams have continued to do an excellent job across the whole spectrum of activity”



The report, '**Public health transformation six years on: partnerships and prevention**', which includes case studies, is available at www.local.gov.uk/publications

Global goals, local solutions

In September 2015, world leaders adopted the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These apply to all 193 members of the United Nations (UN) and include ending poverty, fighting inequalities and tackling climate change.

As part of its commitment to delivering the goals by 2030, the UK is undertaking a voluntary national review of progress towards them. This will draw on evidence from local and national partners, and the findings will be presented to the UN in July 2019.

The evidence gathered so far has highlighted how some councils are already making an active contribution to national



“Some councils are already making an active contribution to national progress and working to embed sustainable development locally”

progress and working to embed sustainable development locally. For example, the experience of Bristol (see panel, below) shows how the goals can be used to bring together local partners, raise awareness of sustainable development and shape local policy.

While not every council has an explicit policy related to the goals, the wide range of services and investment provided by local government invariably means they have a key role to play.

Goal 8, for example, focuses on the importance of promoting decent work and sustainable economic growth. This is an area where many councils have had an impact through the development of local industrial strategies, or through initiatives such as the London Borough of Hackney's Inclusive Economy Commission.

Similarly, goal 5 focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls by making sure they have equal opportunities in all areas of life. Councils have a key role in identifying and tackling violence and harmful practices against women, such as female genital mutilation.

Of course, if councils are to play their part fully in achieving these goals, then the funding pressures they face and the scale of the challenge need to be recognised – points that the LGA will continue to make in our representations to government as part of the review.



Bristol Sustainable Development Goal Alliance

Since the UN's Sustainable Development Goals were agreed in 2015, the Bristol Sustainable Development Goal Alliance has led on driving this agenda in the city. The Alliance is a network of more than 80 stakeholders and includes representatives from local government, higher education, the private sector and civil society.

The Alliance's work has led to the establishment of an innovative partnership between Bristol City Council

and the University of Bristol, which has sought to link local research and engagement with the goals. This has resulted in the goals being used as a framework to develop Bristol's new One City Plan, which offers a shared vision for Bristol in 2050.

The city is now producing a pioneering voluntary local review of its progress towards the goals, along with the development of a monitoring system that will measure progress towards the goals and the One City Plan.

i For further information on the goals and the voluntary national review, visit www.gov.uk/sustainable-developmentgoals

By local government for local government

The LGA and councils have worked together to come up with an alternative to traditional insurance services, with the Local Government Mutual now open for business



Brian Roberts (left) and Ian Rogers are Directors of the Local Government Mutual



As a mutual, any future trading surpluses that may be achieved may be returned to members, or re-invested in the Mutual to further develop its products, or used as the members agree.

Local government is always looking for new and innovative ways to harness the considerable collective purchasing power of councils to help reduce costs and improve services. The Local Government Mutual aims to do just that.

Owned and operated for the benefit of its members, it aims to offer councils a cost-effective alternative to traditional insurance services and products.

So how does it work? The Local Government Mutual is owned by, and operated for the benefit of, its members. Established by 14 councils working with the LGA, it does not have shareholders expecting a return on their investment.

The Mutual will draw on best practice from other mutuals to offer a cost-effective alternative to traditional insurance products and services, using local government capabilities and resources to manage risk more effectively and, where possible, reduce the cost of risk.

At the same time, it will continue to work with the insurance market to procure cost-effective risk transfer for large losses.

There are several benefits to being a member of the Mutual. For a start, each local authority member will contribute to the Mutual based on the risks they have covered. A fair price will be charged and each member's contribution is set individually.

Being a mutual also means that



members can shape the kind of products and information they want. For example, in discussions with the founding member councils and local government more widely, it has become clear that many are currently tied into long-term insurance deals and some would prefer annual cover. So more flexibility is something the Mutual is looking to build into the offer.

The Mutual aims to cover all 'expected' risks – the routine, day-to-day claims. Its analysis of councils' claims histories suggests

Facts on the Local Government Mutual

- The Local Government Mutual is a company owned by its members – its customers.
- It acts solely for the benefit of its members at all times.
- The Board is drawn from the membership.
- Members pay contributions into the mutual fund based on the risks they bring.
- Contributions are used to pay the expected (predictable) claims, to purchase insurance that protects the mutual and its members against unexpected claims, and for operating costs.
- Any mutual trading surplus belongs to the members and must be used for their benefit or as the members may agree.

“The more members the Mutual has, the more risk will be able to be retained and covered directly by contributions”



that 'expected' claims are generally stable and predictable over time. Those risks will be retained by the Mutual and covered by members' contributions. The more members the Mutual has, the more risk will be able to be retained and covered directly by contributions.

For larger and rarer claims, the amount of a claim above the Mutual's retention will be covered by carefully specified, jointly procured insurance to cap the Mutual's and members' financial exposure.

Over time, any trading surpluses achieved by the Mutual may be returned

to its members, or used for the benefit of members as they agree. However, the aim is not to generate excess surpluses, but to keep member contributions low by carefully matching them to the risks the member brings into the Mutual.

Joining the Mutual is a relatively simple process. Currently, if councils want a new insurance supplier – or want to renew their insurance – they have to go through an OJEU tender, a process councils often describe as lengthy and complicated.

The Mutual meets the requirements of the 'Teckal' exemption in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, so a separate OJEU process is not required to become a member. The Mutual carries out an OJEU-compliant procurement of supporting insurance for itself and its members.

As it develops, the Mutual will also enhance the management information provided to councils. They will be able to access comprehensive information about their claims history, and so be able to see what the claims are and their status. Councils will also have the opportunity to dispute any claims, and to handle their own retained claims.

Building on this transparency, the Mutual will also aim to use this information to work with its members to reduce their risks over time by reviewing losses across the membership base and the wider public sector.

The Mutual will work with its members to reduce incidents leading to claims and the level of losses from claims – so, over time, the cost of cover is likely to be reduced. Other mutuals have a good track record in this respect (see left, 'Outdoor activities', for an example of another successful mutual).

More than anything, this is a Mutual by local government, for local government, and it is now open to all LGA member councils. As we are owned and controlled by our members, everything we do is for their benefit and interest, and our goal is to provide value for money.

If you like the sound of that, please visit our website – www.lgmutteral.co.uk – to book an appointment.



Outdoor activities

The Activities Industry Mutual (AIM) first opened its doors in 2007, to provide specialist liability cover for the outdoor activities sector. It has grown to become one of the market-leading providers in the sector, with more than 800 members.

Owned by its members, it gives cover for organisations and individual activities, ranging from water sports and cycling to climbing and coasteering.

By listening to its members, AIM has been able to develop additional services for them – including tailored and flexible payment plans, and motor cover for vehicles (including minibuses, tractors, trailers, vans – and even a Tesla).

Crisis management is another key area for AIM members, and the mutual has partnered with Pharos Response to offer 24/7 crisis containment advice, as well as counselling.



You can find out more at **'The Local Government Mutual: an alternative to traditional local government insurance, a conference and information event taking place on 4 June at the LGA's London HQ. For the programme and to book a place,** please visit www.local.gov.uk/events. **You can also visit the Local Government Mutual stand at the LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth from 2-4 July,** see www.local.gov.uk/conference

LG Inform Plus

The essential guide to your area

The LG Inform Plus service, developed together with local authorities for over a decade, is your essential tool for shaping and running local services. Designed to run in tandem with LG Inform, it gives subscribers the power to drill down to the finer detail.

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comment

Brownfield sites for new homes



Rebecca Pullinger is Planning Campaigner at the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

We live on an island, a small island, with a finite amount of land and space. So it makes social, environmental and economic sense for most new development to re-use and recycle land that has already been developed, in areas where infrastructure and services are in place or can easily be provided.

That's why the results of the CPRE's new analysis of brownfield registers is such fantastic news.

“More than two-thirds of these potential new homes are ‘shovel ready’ and could make an immediate contribution to meeting housing need”

Through their brownfield land registers, councils have worked hard to identify space suitable for more than one million new homes on land that is currently derelict, vacant or underused. Prioritising this land for housing would not only help to remove local eyesores and breathe new life into areas crying out for regeneration, but also prevent the

unnecessary loss of precious countryside and green spaces.

More than two-thirds of these potential new homes are ‘shovel ready’ and could make an immediate contribution to meeting housing need, as they are deliverable within five years. As well as offering an opportunity to deliver much-needed new homes now, our analysis highlights the potential for brownfield land to continue providing a steady pipeline of housing, with more than 120,000 of the potential new homes added to the registers in the past year alone.

This is great news for communities crying out for new housing, for run-down towns and cities in desperate need of regeneration, and for our countryside and environment that is facing unprecedented strain from new development.

Despite this demonstrable success, the full potential of the registers to bring forward as much suitable brownfield land for housing as possible is yet to be fulfilled, because there are a large number of sites that are being missed.

The restrictive definition of

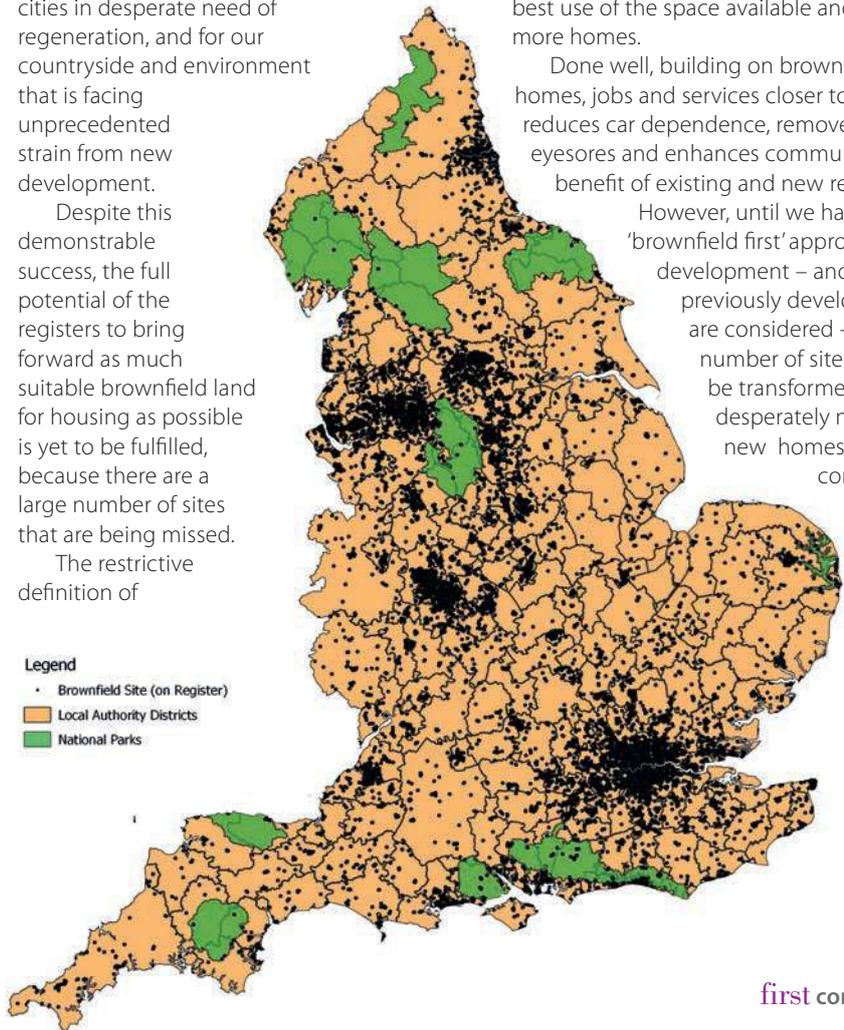
‘previously developed land’ in the Government’s planning rule book – the National Planning Policy Framework – means that sites, such as supermarkets and their car parks, which could be converted to provide homes while maintaining existing use, are unlikely to be included in the registers.

We also know that many small sites are being overlooked, and that the housing density assumptions for the brownfield land identified is low. By increasing the density of housing built on all brownfield land, and ensuring that all small brownfield sites in urban centres are identified and added to the registers, councils will be able to make best use of the space available and deliver more homes.

Done well, building on brownfield brings homes, jobs and services closer together, reduces car dependence, removes local eyesores and enhances communities for the benefit of existing and new residents.

However, until we have a ‘brownfield first’ approach to development – and all types of previously developed land are considered – a large number of sites that could be transformed into desperately needed new homes will continue to be overlooked.

Legend
• Brownfield Site (on Register)
Local Authority Districts
National Parks



For more information about the Campaign to Protect Rural England, please visit www.cpre.org.uk

group leaders' comments

Leading on green issues

“A key issue of our local elections campaign launch was the excellent track record of Liberal Democrat councils on environmental issues”



Councillor Howard Sykes MBE
is Leader of the LGA's
Liberal Democrat Group

The local election campaign is well under way – a busy time for us all!

I send a big thank you to those standing down this May. You have made a real difference to thousands of people across the country.

A special thank you, in particular, to Liberal Democrat councillors for flying the flag. The Liberal Democrats and the wider Liberal Democrat local government family salutes you and your hard work.

As I write, it's just been confirmed there are many more Liberal Democrat candidates standing now than when these seats were last contested in 2015, which is great news.

The Liberal Democrats have won more council seats from the Conservatives than

Labour has over the past two years. We have also registered a bigger improvement in the share of the vote in those seats we have contested. So, we have a good starting point for these elections.

Our local elections campaign was launched by Vince Cable in South Somerset. It was great to hear him highlighting the hard work and achievements of Liberal Democrat-run councils across the country.

A key issue of the launch was the excellent track record of Liberal Democrat councils on environmental issues – councils that include South Lakeland, Watford, Eastbourne, Eastleigh, South Somerset, Oadby & Wigston, and York.

All are pioneering ways to green their areas. This includes major investments in sustainable transport, providing new open spaces, increasing recycling rates, reducing energy bills, building green homes and training residents with the skills to maintain them for the future. All this and, at the same time, saving residents money.

We are the party of the environment – make sure you let your citizens know that.

We look forward to welcoming many more Liberal Democrat councillors to the local government family and wish all those re-standing this May the best of luck. Remember, it is not over until the polls close at 10pm!

senior vice-chair's comment

Stand up and be counted



Councillor Nick Forbes CBE
is Senior Vice-Chair of the LGA

It is a huge privilege and honour to be elected by our residents to represent them on their local councils, and to try to make a difference to them and the areas in which we live.

It is something we don't – and shouldn't – take for granted.

In the run-up to the local elections, many of you will be out canvassing, delivering leaflets and talking to local people about the tough choices we all face amid rising demand for essential local services and continuing austerity in the public sector.

The LGA will continue to be the

national voice of local government, championing its work and calling for more resources, particularly to address the significant funding gaps facing adult and children's services, and the rising demand for homelessness services.

It is also time to highlight all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes at this time of year to make it possible for us to stand as councillors and to vote in local elections alongside our fellow citizens.

Across the country, hundreds of council returning officers and electoral services staff will be busy making sure everything is in place for a smooth poll on 2 May – from signs to your local polling stations to ensuring the security of election counts. I'm sure the public

will again highlight democracy in action through a variety of social media posts.

Meanwhile, to those of you who are stepping down on polling day, or don't get the result you are hoping for, thank you for all your hard work on behalf of the local residents you represent. Many of you will realise that being a councillor is a tough job, which often comes with little appreciation.

I look forward to seeing many of you after the elections. Irrespective of different coloured rosettes, we must remember that being part of local government allows us to improve the lives of people in our wide-ranging communities at a level to which they can relate.

“It is time to highlight all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes at this time of year to make it possible for us to stand as councillors”

group leaders' comments



Councillor Izzi Seccombe OBE is Deputy Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group

Fighting hard for every seat

“Councillors work hard to improve the quality of people's lives, often with little formal recognition”

We are approaching the biggest set of local elections in the four-year cycle, with almost 8,400 seats across 248 councils up for election on 2 May.

Despite being in government nationally, and having to make some very difficult financial decisions, the Conservative Party has performed well in local elections since 2010, and remains the largest political party in local government, both in terms of the number of councillors and councils controlled. Conservative-run councils are renowned for delivering more for less, with lower council tax and better public services.

I would like to express my gratitude for their service to those councillors who are stepping down. Councillors across the country work hard to improve the quality of people's lives and the communities they serve, often with little formal recognition.

For those who are standing for re-election, I wish you all the best of luck in what is undoubtedly a difficult political climate, given the current discussions around Brexit.

Councillors are the backbone of the Conservative Party and, in the run-up to polling day, we need to fight hard for every seat that we are defending. As someone who is not up for election, I look forward to working with other members of my group on Warwickshire County Council to support those of our district colleagues who are up for election.



Councillor Anne Western CBE is a Labour Deputy Chair of the LGA

After the words, renters want action

“All renters should be able to access a decent, secure and affordable place to live”

Over the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of people who live in the private rented sector.

By 2021, almost one in four households in Britain will be renting privately, as soaring house prices and stagnant wages put home ownership out of the reach of growing numbers of people.

In England alone, there are now more than 11 million renters, and too many of them are getting a bad deal. All renters should be able to access a decent, secure, professionally managed and affordable place to live.

Many renters will have been pleased with the Government's recent U-turn on ending 'no fault' evictions, following the lead of the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales by abolishing 'Section 21' notices.

Any new pledge to help renters is good news, but this latest promise won't work if landlords can still force tenants out by raising the rent.

Renters will also want to see the actions that follow the words. For nine years, the Government has consistently failed to tackle the problems raised by private renters. Tenants deserve new rights and protections across the board, not just to stop unfair evictions, but including an end to costly rent increases and sub-standard homes.

Local government is forced to step in and pick up the pieces when unfair evictions make families homeless, so any move that will genuinely support renters will be of benefit to us too.



Councillor Julian German is a Lead Member of the LGA's Independent Group

Culture is not a luxury

“Investments in culture, tourism and sport are a necessity for the socio-economic wellbeing of our communities”

At a time when councils are making hard financial decisions, such things as libraries, parks and cultural initiatives can be perceived as luxuries.

Sitting on the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sports (CTS) Board, as Vice-Chair, provides a regular reminder of the benefits CTS programmes have, not only for the local economy, but also for community cohesion, and public health and wellbeing. Investments in CTS are a necessity for the socio-economic wellbeing of our communities.

At Cornwall Council, where Independents have been part of a joint administration for 10 years, we have made £350 million of savings over the past decade. We have recognised the need to work differently and have brought together the council, Arts Council England, Historic England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership to ensure joined-up investment priorities.

By bringing key partners together, we can maximise the impact of our collective resources. For example, the Cornwall Museum Partnership has been recognised as a beacon of good practice, bringing greater collaboration and skills training. We have extended library opening hours and increased footfall through devolution to our parish and town councils and community groups.

Many residents value their arts, libraries and museums just as much as good roads and rubbish collections. The challenge to us as local leaders is to be creative in how we respond to the Government's continued cuts, to ensure our communities thrive.



For more information about the LGA's political groups, see www.local.gov.uk

When the rain comes



Innes Thomson is Chief Executive of the Association of Drainage Authorities

Climate change and the pressure to build more homes increases the need to find new and effective ways of managing surface water – particularly in urban areas, and especially for new developments.

Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are one way of doing this. Within urban areas, SuDS mimic the way rainfall drains in natural systems, to manage water levels and not

“Councils have been at the forefront of developing and using sustainable drainage systems”

increase flood risk. This is achieved using a whole range of infrastructure, including:

- ‘source control’ soakaway drains and permeable surfaces to allow rain to filter directly into the ground
- ‘conveyance on site’ filter strips (verges) and swales (shallow, flat-bottomed channels) to slow and filter water run-off by draining it across planted areas
- ‘larger-scale attenuation’ basins, ponds and wetlands to slow flows and temporarily store excess water.

Councils have been at the forefront of developing and using SuDS. For example, Milton Keynes Council and the Bedford Group of Internal Drainage Boards worked together to develop a linear park, at the heart of a new housing development, that doubles as a large reservoir attenuation basin.

This public open space offers a sanctuary of wellbeing and leisure for residents, while being designed to occasionally store water to protect homes and the catchment from flooding.

A new organisation has now been formed to help develop similar projects and support the use of SuDS within all new developments.

Councils and other private and public bodies involved in managing water have come together to form the Association of SuDS Authorities (ASA).

ASA will be working closely alongside our team at the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA), as well as engaging with government and industry bodies to provide a joined-up approach, supporting local authorities and others in the delivery of sustainable drainage.

The collaboration between ADA and ASA builds important bridges between rural and urban challenges, reflecting the need to take a whole river catchment approach to the issue of drainage. Membership is open to all local authorities.

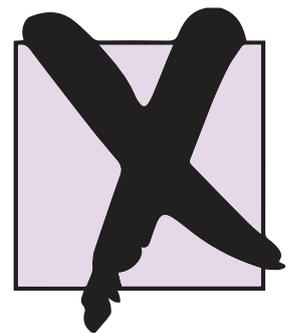


The Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) is the membership organisation for drainage, water level and flood risk management authorities. For more information, please visit www.ada.org.uk and www.suds-authority.org.uk



Notice of Group Elections 2019

Effective from Monday 6 May 2019



The Local Government Association (LGA) Independent Group will hold elections for the posts of Group Leader, and Group Treasurer between May and July 2019.

Election guidance is available from our website or on request.

Nomination papers are available from Monday 6 May, from our website or on request from the office of the Returning Officer. Completed nomination forms must be received by the Returning Officer no later than 5.00pm on Thursday 23 May.

Only councillors from councils in membership of the LGA and able to receive support from the Independent Group, at the time of close of nominations, will be eligible to stand for election.

In the event of there being more than one nomination for a position, a postal ballot will be held. Postal votes will be issued on Thursday 6 June and the deadline for receipt of completed ballots will be 5.00pm on Thursday 27 June.

Results will be announced at the Group Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 2 July, as part of the LGA Annual Conference in Bournemouth.

For further information please contact:

Claire Holloway

Returning Officer for the Independent Group elections 2019

Telephone: 020 7664 3156

Email: claire.holloway@local.gov.uk

Positive parking management



Kelvin Reynolds is Director of Corporate and Public Affairs at the British Parking Association

In the past, all roads led to Rome. Now, it is said that all roads exist to connect parking places.

This may seem like a passing comment, but every journey does begin and end with parking.

When kerbside space is at a premium and under pressure from a variety of competing demands, effective parking management is required to ensure it is kept fair for all and not a free for all.

There is no such thing as a free parking space. Some parking may be free at the point of use, but someone, somewhere, is paying for its upkeep and maintenance. So-called free parking is always subsidised in some way – either by council tax payers or business rate payers, or a combination of both.

With around 39 million vehicles on Britain's roads, we are beginning to realise that tackling air quality and congestion should be higher priorities, as should continuing to ensure that parking is provided and well managed, and that it works. After all, we would all prefer to live in a cleaner, safer, less congested world where we can move around freely and easily.

Unfortunately, the media tends to report on parking management when it goes wrong, which may only be in a few cases, but it gives the impression that it happens all the time. These negatively perceived stories are echoed in politics.

To combat this, British Parking Association (BPA) local authority members have joined forces to create the Positive Parking Agenda, a national campaign designed to deliver and build public confidence in the parking sector. Its focus is on promoting the positive side of parking management and the campaign aims to highlight the outcomes that effective parking management creates.

It will challenge misconceptions about the parking sector and local government's role,

showing that the parking experience can be a better one for all concerned. The ultimate vision is for parking to be recognised as a valued service and one that makes a significant contribution to a sustainable environment.

In addition, the BPA is conducting research to understand what people really think about parking, in order to prioritise the campaign's attention. More than 120 councils, as well as a number of private organisations, councillors, and stakeholders, have signed up to the campaign's key principles.

There is more work to be done to reach the remaining authorities and encourage greater synergy across the UK. Consequently, the BPA and Positive Parking Agenda founding members are busy engaging with like-minded colleagues at conferences and regional meetings.

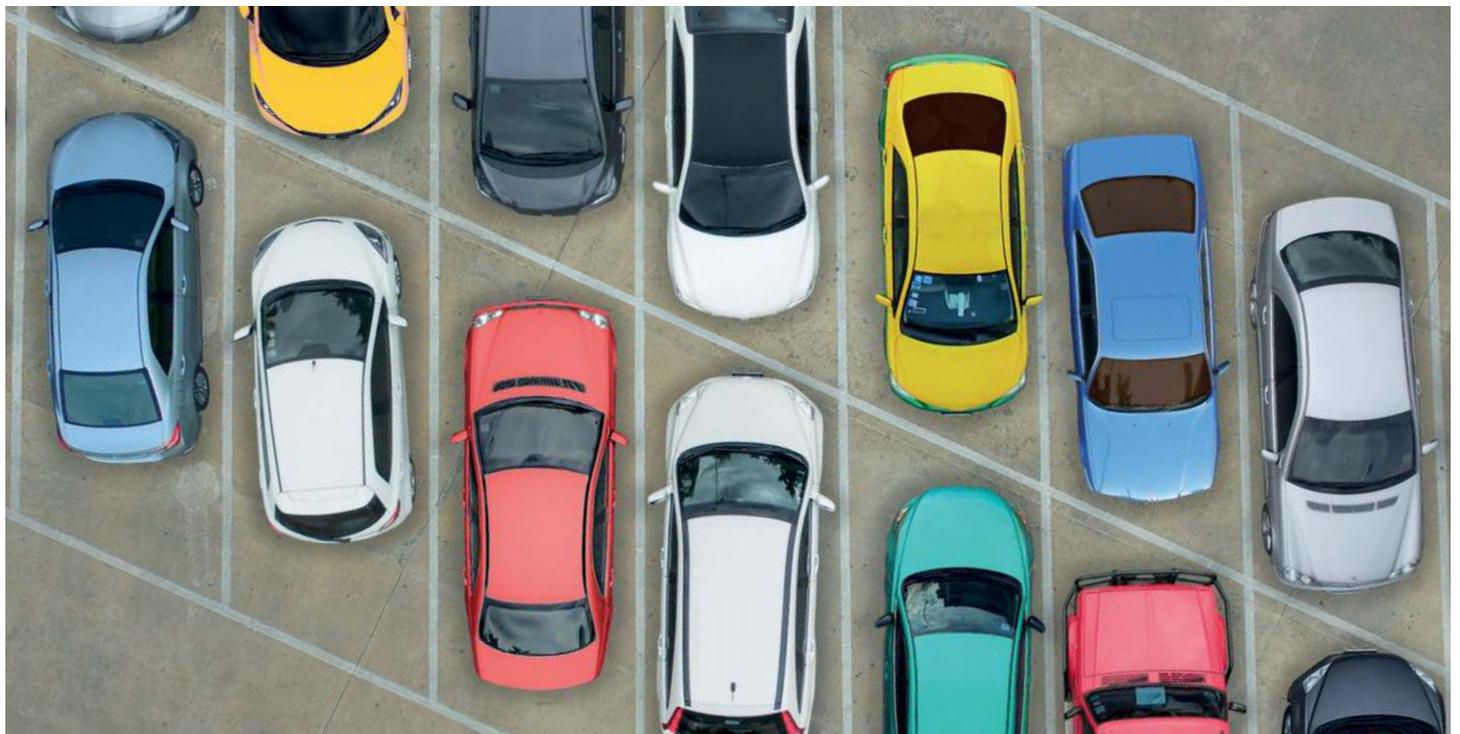
Parking is a dynamic sector, and with the advent of connected and automated vehicles, electric cars, and the digital economy, it's changing more rapidly than at any other period during the BPA's 50-year existence.

Find out more about the Positive Parking Agenda and celebrate the benefits of good parking management, as delivered by your local council, by signing up today at www.positiveparkingagenda.co.uk/

“The ultimate vision is for parking to be recognised as a valued service and one that makes a significant contribution to a sustainable environment”



The British Parking Association is a not-for-profit organisation representing, promoting and influencing the parking and traffic management profession in the UK and Europe. Find out more at www.britishparking.co.uk/



SIGN UP TO THE POSITIVE PARKING AGENDA AND TRANSFORM PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

CAMPAIGN PRIORITIES

CONGESTION

SAFETY

AIR QUALITY

ACCESSIBILITY

FAIRNESS

TECHNOLOGY

WORKING TOGETHER



By signing up you will be pledging your support of PPA campaign priorities and agree to promote them. You will receive newsletters detailing campaign and lobbying plans and be invited to assist in addressing specific issues.

To sign up visit positiveparkingagenda.co.uk

Supported by



councillor

Tackling winter pressures



Councillor Ketan Sheth (Lab) is Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee at Brent Council

The term ‘winter pressures’ is a phrase we hear regularly during that busy season, as hospitals struggle to meet demand – but what does it mean in practice? That’s what my scrutiny committee wanted to find out when we discussed this issue earlier in the year.

For many years, it has been commonly perceived that winter pressures are the NHS’s problem. But is this fair given that we serve the same communities and the pressure on health and social care is significant?

In response, Brent Council, Brent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust have teamed up to address the problem in recent years.

It is no small challenge because parts of Brent are among the most deprived places in London, and Northwick Park Hospital is one of the busiest A&E departments in the capital. Early planning and a coordinated cross-organisational approach have helped us shape a robust winter plan that maintains patient experience, safety and clinical effectiveness during the most demanding period of the year.

This planning began with lessons learned during the winter of 2017/18, which were subsequently built into our current plan. It boils down to: keeping people out of hospital; ensuring patients who are admitted are treated and discharged quickly and safely; and provision of adequate home support in the community.

Brent CCG responded by giving patients access to GP appointments from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week, via a network of GP hubs. The hubs play a crucial role in curbing the number of people going to A&E with minor

ailments. Use of them rose by 42 per cent between October and December 2017 and the same period a year later. The CCG also provided an enhanced service in care homes and a targeted approach to flu vaccinations, and it developed closer working relationships between acute and primary care providers.

The Department of Health gave the council a one-off payment of £1.3 million to support hospital discharges. It ‘purchased’ 15 more beds, offered reward payments to care homes that could quickly assess and accommodate patients, and provided an additional handyman service for home adaptations. It also invested in more social worker, occupational therapist and

coordinator capacity, to boost its Home First initiative to get patients home with the minimum of delay.

Handover times between ambulance crews and A&E staff at Northwick Park Hospital have improved and benefited from an extra paramedic/nurse to help with triage, and an advanced assessment triage area.

These plans have helped, but underpinning it all is the dedication and hard work of staff on the front line.

The reality is that we face a growing population that is living longer and is increasingly troubled by a host of long-term conditions. The only way we can manage this, aside from promoting greater personal responsibility for health, is for the public sector and its partners to develop a healthy working relationship that recognises this is everyone’s problem.



parliament

Making the case for funding

While all eyes are on Britain's departure from the European Union, there is another process taking place in Westminster that will have an equally significant impact on the country over the next few years.

The latest Spending Review, the first since 2015, will set the budgets across government for the next three years and comes at a crucial time for many local authorities.

Since 2010, core government funding for councils has decreased by £15 billion. Despite the fact we have seen savings through efficiencies, these reductions – combined with rising demand for vital services – have put increasing pressure on local authorities. The LGA's analysis estimates there will be a funding gap of at least £8 billion by 2024/25, assuming things just stay as they are.

The impact is being seen across the country, with councils having to make difficult decisions in key areas such as adult and children's social care, as well as housing. Other day-to-day services, such as planning and transport, have had funding reduced by between 30 and 50 per cent, according to a report by the Public Accounts Committee.

Part of the challenge faced by councils is that they need to make decisions around services for the long term when funding is agreed in three to five-year packages, creating uncertainty, particularly in the final year. Complicating the picture is the fact that, from April 2020 – the beginning of the new Spending Review period – there will also be changes to council funding resulting from further business rates retention and the Fair Funding Review. With less than a year until these changes come into effect, there is a lack of clarity not only on how much funding will be available, but also on how it will be distributed – or even the means of delivery.

The LGA is calling on the Government to invest urgently in local services in the 2019 Spending Review. In particular, it's vital that local government has sustainable funding that provides the



resources councils need to deliver local services.

The challenges facing local authorities in the coming years cannot be overstated. Not only do we have an ageing population, but demand in other areas, such as public health and protecting vulnerable children, is rising. This can mean it becomes harder for councils to deliver services aimed at prevention.

However, it's precisely these services that mean local government has a key role to play in helping to tackle many of the issues facing the nation. With the right funding and powers, councils can continue to lead their local areas. They can improve residents' lives and reduce demand for public

services, such as the NHS, or pressures on the police, while at the same time saving money for the taxpayer.

Over the coming months, the LGA will be working with key government departments to ensure that the importance of sustainable local services is recognised. Alongside this, the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee has launched an Inquiry into Local Government Finance and the 2019 Spending Review. In its evidence to the committee, the LGA will again be highlighting the real challenges facing councils across the country and the value that they can bring with appropriate funding.



You can find out more about [the LGA's Spending Review campaign](https://www.local.gov.uk/councils-can) at www.local.gov.uk/councils-can

For more on our parliamentary work, please visit www.local.gov.uk/parliament

elections

Political turmoil affects local contests

local by-elections

Basildon, Vange

LAB HELD
2.6% over Con Turnout 14%

Burnley, Rosehill with Burnley Wood

LIB DEM HELD
10.1% over Lab Turnout 20.4%

Durham, Esh and Witton Gilbert

LIB DEM HELD
42.5% over Lab Turnout 28.2%

Kensington and Chelsea, Dalgarno

LAB HELD
31.8% over Con Turnout 29.4%

Lambeth, Thornton

LAB HELD
0.8% over Lib Dem Turnout 25.5%

Merthyr Tydfil, Cyfarthfa

IND HELD
37.4% over Lab Turnout 26.9%

Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Holditch and Chesterton

IND GAIN FROM LAB
2% over Lab Turnout 17.1%

Norfolk, Wroxham

CON HELD
31.9% over Lib Dem Turnout 20.7%

Southend-on-Sea, Milton

LAB HELD
18.3% over Con Turnout 20.6%

Sutton, Wallington North

LIB DEM HELD
12.1% over Con Turnout 31.4%

Thurrock, Aveley and Uplands

CON GAIN FROM THURROCK IND
12.5% over Ind Turnout 24.5%



Professors Colin Rallings (right) and Michael Thrasher are Associate Members, Nuffield College, Oxford



There's no escaping the national political turmoil over Brexit, even for local council by-elections.

Two seats that recently changed hands both feature UKIP as a back-story, as does another vacancy where UKIP's absence left a closely contested two-party battle between Labour and the Conservatives.

There is evidence, too, that Labour's internal party strife may be affecting their electoral prospects.

In Newcastle-under-Lyme's newly established Holditch and Chesterton ward, the Independent candidate, Ken Owen, inflicted a surprising defeat on Labour, courtesy of a 19 per cent swing. In last May's election, Owen had finished in a distant third place, trailing two Labour victors. He was contesting that election as an incumbent, having been elected for the predecessor Holditch ward in 2014. Like many of his ilk, Owen sported UKIP colours then, but subsequently left the party and sat as an Independent.

Meanwhile, the Conservative Party was rolling back the former UKIP vote in Thurrock's Aveley and Uplands ward. UKIP first won it in 2012, by just 27 votes, a year before the party's national surge. In the following three elections, the party made the ward relatively safe.

UKIP also safely negotiated a by-election in December 2014. Elected then was Tim Aker MEP, who was part of Nigel Farage's Strasbourg contingent. In January 2018, however, Aker and other UKIP councillors broke away from the party and formed the Thurrock Independents. Group members whose seats were scheduled for re-election contested the May elections,

but it was only Aker's seat that survived the voters' test. He has now joined Farage's new Brexit party.

Further signs of Brexit stresses on UKIP can be found in the party's decision to withdraw from Basildon's Vange ward.

The party contested in 2015 and 2016, when it received 37 per cent of the vote and lost only narrowly. Its fortunes in Basildon have dipped since then, including losing a by-election seat last June.

UKIP's removal from the fray left just two candidates contesting. Only 26 votes separated them, but a mere 14 per cent of electors turned out to vote. The winner, Aidan McGurran, Managing Editor of Mirror Group Newspapers, can now write first-hand of electoral apathy.

Labour, too, is facing its fair share of internal strife. In ordinary circumstances, when Lib Peck, a long-standing Lambeth councillor and leader resigned her safe seat after her appointment to City Hall, the vacancy would hardly have merited consideration. The party won all three seats by a distance in 2018, but a by-election was fought here as recently as February 2019.

Although Labour held on there was a collapse in vote share as the Liberal Democrats moved to within 300 votes of victory. Days later, the local MP, Chuka Umunna, became a key figure in a breakaway group of fellow parliamentarians that has since become the new Change UK party.

Such drama gave added spice to this latest election battle. It ended with Labour securing a victory margin of just 19 votes over the Liberal Democrats amid another collapse in vote share.



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